



PARANOIA MACHINES OF THE STATE

One should insist that paranoia is the mass psychological fuel of neo-fascist and right-wing populist movements. Today they have chosen the vulnerable foreigners as their suitable enemy object. And to anticipate it right away, the paranoia of right-wing populists and that of the state reinforce each other. But the paranoia held in latency remains first and foremost that of the state and its authorities, which have used data processing, cameras, satellites, computer spying and wiretapping to stage such a comprehensive observation of the population that we can easily speak of a paranoid political situation. Paranoia is further fuelled by the fact that, despite the overwhelming power and perfection of technological means, not everything can be completely recorded (and must therefore continue to be monitored). Since the global optical surveillance by the satellite view is possible, the unmonitored space remains only a mildly laughable Atopos, because a surveillance satellite from a few hundred kilometers distance can send high-resolution real-time images from any place in the world as top shots with pixelated detail fidelity to the computer monitors of the employees of secret services. The images come from the calculations themselves, they are numerically programmed.

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The production of paranoia goes through several stages. It begins in an uncertain and tense atmosphere in which one only knows that something is wrong. It is followed by a mood in which situations suddenly make sense and the world is filled with meaning, and it ends in a third phase in which things and situations are supplemented with excess meaning. Paranoia therefore always implies a delusion of interpretation and meaning that is consolidated in an immovable symbolic and imaginary order that establishes relatively consistent delusional aggregates. And thus an old system of symbols is replaced by a certain number of collective delusional aggregates with which a, albeit fragile, symbolic order can be produced that is constantly transformed in the media today. If today, for example, an existing factual situation is literally flooded with data and information streams and fake convulsions via all media channels, so that because of this excess alone every fact can be easily reinterpreted. It is often difficult to tell what, in view of the oversupply of information, is targeted disinformation or only inaccurate screening. This makes the processing problem itself more and more precarious, so that ultimately only the permanent reconstruction of the risky events helps, in which, however, all the conditions that led to an event are set by the reconstruction work itself within the framework of teleological necessity. The paranoids either construct conspiracies or proclaim the gift of the dark to be able to see through the dark secrets of others before they are even set into the world, so that the paranoid judgment also corresponds to an anticipatory preventive logic with which a suspect is considered guilty from the outset. (Cf. Deleuze/Guattari 1992: 393) Recent events such as the Brexit, Trump's fake news policy or the notorious lying policy of right-wing populism show that the statements in this post-factual situation sometimes no longer even require the appearance of truth. Crime rates in Germany, for example, are knowingly misassociated with refugees, which neither creates a sense of shame nor leads to serious consequences for the media, which disseminate the post factual.

In this respect, it is not surprising that the incessant generation and interpretation of data is immanent in the post-factual age, which, however, is by no means arbitrary (and without any meaning), but takes on a paranoid form due to the institutionally created contingencies. This, in turn, is technologically underpinned by the automated evaluation of large amounts of data for the purpose of recognizing patterns, regularities and hidden laws in the data streams. (Doll 2016: 312) This liquefaction of meaning in the endless data pap as a result of the permanent search for patterns and correlations in the data sets produced does not mean, as assumed by Baudrillard with his simulation theory, for example, that every meaning disappears and the signs circulate indifferently only in the As-Ob (Baudrillard 1982), but rather that the delusion of interpretation is becoming more and more intense, precisely because of the fact that it still has to be interpreted and interpreted, regardless of what is now meant in detail. In the last instance, this lies in future-oriented capitalization, which encompasses both money and bits in their interchangeability as well as an increase in capital that calculates the future, solely for the purpose of staging everything and everything as a financial investment, which, regardless of the underlying value to which it allegedly refers, is supposed to generate nothing but returns. (Cf. Vief 1991: 132f.)

With regard to the exchangeability of bits, the computer proves to be a character transformer that processes pure information, but not without content, but with arbitrary and exchangeable content. Just as money must be exchangeable for goods, regardless of which, bits must mean something, regardless of what they mean. (ibid.) Money and bits indicate communication exclusively under the aspect of the negation of a specific meaning. Or, to put it another way, to the exclusion of any meaning, except that it must be incessantly meant, so that the fact of being or the crossed perspective of meaning clearly comes to the fore here. For this reason, the current data invasion does not lead to a loss of meaning, but to an overproduction of meaning that is complementary to the indifference of every meaning set by capital, but it must still be meant, otherwise the system would fall apart. This kind of overproduction of meaning constitutes the real loss of meaning.

Thus, today the creative capacity of high-tech paranoia is characterized less by a lack of orientation knowledge than by the overproduction of meaning that results from the game that there is any meaning at all. When meanings become interchangeable in multiple circulating artificial interpretation processes, out of which the struggles for interpretations first arise, then a mad search for meaning inevitably follows. While capital can certainly live with this kind of loss of meaning through the overproduction of meanings, this is not easily possible for the state, because as we have seen, with it the equivalence of all meanings is questioned if it is to be expelled as the point of view of all viewpoints.

One could say with Lacan that the unfiltered data stream is the realm of the real, while information and metadata represent reality, a world made intelligible by cognitive filters and technological infrastructures, which itself is composed of registers of the imaginary and the symbolic.¹ Unwavering accumulation of data, information and opinions, which react almost hysterically to each other, especially in the social networks, as the same and different in every moment, in order to produce delusional aggregates and illusionary waste of any kind. But all this is by no means open in the sense that an observer sets the difference between before/after in such a way that he designates neither one side nor the other, but the difference itself, namely the present, which in turn itself is called difference. is a non-place and thus remains open. Instead, the alternativelessness of the system is preached obtrusively along an ever-same present, which draws itself like chewing gum, and which therefore remains bleak with regard to its reference to the future, since capital as the all-constituent system is about borrowing from or accessing an already modified become of the future, which in turn affects the present, insofar as the present is determined by what it is supposed to have been in the future and will not have been. Thus the system in the sense of Futur II is closed, but it thoroughly forgets that the future remains black and contingent.

The postmedia is not characterized by the radical abolition of the old media, but by their transformation and mixing with new

media. Every thing and every "event" – no matter how much singularity can be insisted on as the propagandists of the singular society do – is today not only integrated into media networks in which objects and subjects, opinions and counter-opinions circulate endlessly, but is often first constructed in the clouds of social networks.

And these networks are permanently searched and exploited using the personalized and personalizing algorithms of the data industry. The subject groups on the Internet by no means indulge in free participation and enjoy re-singularization; rather, the media are adapted to the new conditions of data production. In the social media, the divided and at the same time atomized user, if his employment is made productive in unpaid time as a source of data, is fed into algorithmic governance, whereby this kind of algorithmic data management leads to new forms of cerebral devastation.

It is clear that the mania for interpretation must constantly serve the manic search for signs and their relations in order to also underpin the political argumentations circulating in the media and state machines. This process can be set in motion at the political level because today there is a) the notorious collection and processing of data by the state (combined with the population's fear that a technical super-player might develop), b) automatic pattern recognition of the data, which is tantamount to an algorithmization of the delusion of interpretation, and c) the individual's fear that this state apparatus could become independent. The population's mistrust of the state is the reflection of the state's mistrust of the external and internal enemy. State paranoia is characterized by this interrelationship. (Doll 2016: 308) The secret services in particular rely on the paranoid mode of their computer programs that they have breathed in, in which excessive data processing is carried out in order to recognize patterns and correlations in the metadata and thus to literally construct enemies. If it is assumed that the opposing side always wants to inflict the worst on you and the enemy sits everywhere, then a kind of paranoid warfare of the state takes place by means of a permanent data paranoia. (ibid.)

Finally, paranoia is incorporated into program instructions at the level of algorithmic data processing itself, so that computers today are subject to the same trend as states – they are programmed to find anything suspicious because they are programmed to search for dangerous data clusters. The algorithms necessary for data filtering use specific patterns. Thus, the state paranoia itself makes the search algorithms of data processing paranoid, i.e. all data and metadata are treated as those of an enemy.

Big Data has its origins in the manic production of patterns and correlations in the financial markets. If Big Data is now used in government contexts, then it is about the production of political meanings, especially through the search for patterns and correlations in the corresponding data columns, in order to, building on this, find "answers" to questions such as how the population behaves as a social aggregate and how individuals react to further government impositions. However, data processing can also lead to the establishment of random correlations between different components, the importance of which is overestimated or without any significance, up to the perception of patterns and correlations, where actually none can be found at all. Data paranoia, for example, constantly generates this kind of clustering illusion, especially as data collection continues to grow quantitatively. (ibid: 313) And due to correlations found by chance, the wrong been targeted by the intelligence services.

Cloud computing, on the other hand, is speculating on the future of data processing. Whether the collected data will really make sense in the future after it has been automatically processed and further collected data has been added will only become clear at a later point in time. Paranoia here indicates that normativity is derived from the construction of a future that could always be different, and for this very reason, on the one hand, it must continue to be pursued and, on the other, it must be normalized, i.e. it must be dealt with preventively. State paranoia is thus closely related to prevention, for it has its own anticipatory aspects. Future surprises with a negative connotation are to be avoided by recognising them already in the uncertain present. The future already exists today as a virtual reason, in the form of a current risk that legitimizes the use of pre-emptive and partly already automated forms of government and especially repressive instruments. It is now governed by a digital, technological performativity that has arisen through algorithmic governance, which in itself proclaims that it is set to function on autopilot.

Beyond all this, the state feeds paranoia, according to Canetti a disease of power, with entire registers of affect modulation. Thus, colors can serve as collective warning signals for the population, whereby, as was observed in George W. Bush's anti-terror measures, the use of certain colors as warning systems after September 11, central government functions that amount to prevention can be directly coupled with the nervous system of each individual. "Direct Perception" is an amedial, asymbolic perception (Massumi 2010: 106) that is based on the fact that the future condenses into an emphatic experience of the present. In retrospect, the event 9/11 thus proves to be a predetermined breaking point of power, with which new instances of interpretation were created to keep the coming abyss of catastrophe, which remains a construction, running through the hyper-production of contingency and conspiracy narratives. This happens above all by transforming the belief in coherent causalities in politics into a mode of latency, if the masses do not become disenchanted with politics as much as they are often conjured up, so that politics must be made less with discourses than with moods. This results in a real mood market that is less fluid than the capital market, which is why regulatory mechanisms must be used that the capital market does not know.

In the course of the rise of right-wing populist movements, the always reactionary and foamy fear of social decline among some sections of the population, especially in Europe, has long since turned into a passion, and with every call for even higher fences at the European borders, this collectivized passion reaches an even higher level of libidinally occupied paranoia, which, and this is noteworthy, in turn freezes in new, state, infrastructural and architectural forms as well as exclusion mechanisms. This mass-intensive paranoia thus ultimately remains the state form of government of insecurity of security, which requires the development

of a social police force, which today ensures that more and more people worldwide are marked as virtual enemies and terrorists. It must therefore be understood why the new forms of social police and militarization in the social field cannot be separated from the discursive construction of the new figure of the enemy. This form of enemy construction creates a monstrosity that culminates in the general virtualization of an unspecific and unqualified enemy, who must be constantly updated through accelerated procedures of qualification and continuous re-qualification, at the cost of a growing criminalization of all those social practices that do not conform to the institutions of capital and the state. At present, collective paranoia flows continuously through symbolic and imaginary monuments, through sluices and into canalization systems that are constantly fed with desires oriented towards neoliberally propagated, possessive individualism without the individual, which rages above all in the middle class, but also among the dependent. In the middle classes, this individualism is effortlessly combined with a form of nationalism fed by a kind of victim logic that serves exclusively to demand a larger share of the general wealth, although the failure of one's own efforts is not due to the state and capital, but to the fact that the individual is not the result of the individual's own efforts.

A theorist of the Frankfurt School, Franz Neumann, has blamed the interplay of external fear, crisis and internal fear for the susceptibility of citizens to a politics of moods. (Neumann 1967: 266ff.) The external fear reacts to economic and political crisis phenomena, whereby at this point the moods of the right-wing populist movements react to the neoliberal reduction of politics to a productive struggle of economic interests, which is founded on the capitalization of all social relations in order to serve the fear (of the middle classes) of the loss of privileges and economic standards. Capitalization here is unconsciously the economic cancer that eats away at the disposable incomes of the middle class and the precariat. On the run, which today is not so much an escape from public life, as Neumann still assumed, but rather an escape into the possible, the individuals, who are constantly inoculated that it is nothing more than the multiplication of their own small capital that their life is supposed to be, encounter the inner monster of a hyper-narcissism whose courses of psychological action grotesquely resemble the catastrophe theorems staged in the media field. Thus one willingly leaves the badly designed world behind to discover an ego that urges to return to bestiality and is promoted with the construction of the financially risky subject, but which for the greater part of the population is identical to debt, with which it is absorbed by the financially financed economy without leaving bubbles on the sea of debt. But the freedom of the citizens continues to be mobilized as a promise, a freedom that often enough circulates in the hapless cycles of debt, so that the latent fear that leads to a state of exhaustion must be transformed into a political sadism directed against the poor and foreigners. In a state of powerlessness, such a deconstructed self sends out signals on which the right-wing populist movements can easily rely, using the external fear that reacts to the impending loss of privileges and is projected onto the refugees, while at the same time prescribing political therapy for the moods of individual failure and well-being.

The external fear is transposed into a political sadism that knows no pity for the poor and the excluded and therefore has to be directed against the surplus population in the South (and West). The right-wing populist therapeutics of political sadism can thus tie in with the fearful and at the same time cynical ego interest of the financially risky subject who serves the Eros of economic selection. The endless repetition of stereotypical, projective formulas, of which Adorno has already spoken, is the discursive fuel of right-wing populism, which today attempts to organize neoliberal politics in the direction of a free-driving unease. Conversely, the neoliberal elite, in order to stifle any desire for change in the population, needs to a certain extent right-wing populism, which it also promotes, as a means of generating fear and mobilizing to secure its power. The associated transformation of political affairs into religious conflicts, fake news and civilisation wars was, incidentally, pursued from the outset by all the apparatuses of neoliberal power. So it is not surprising that the collectively organized paranoia is permanently enriched with identitarian delusions, fake news and delirious ideas in order to finally achieve such a highly explosive state, a kairos, so to speak, in which the politics of feelings demand, for the sake of one's own happiness, the genocide that is to be carried out against the foreigners, the poor and the invaders, ultimately against the global surplus population. In spite of the new situational mixture of set pieces of folk elements, xenophobia, racism and nationalism, as they are carried onto the streets especially in eastern Germany, the strategies remain classically oriented towards the assumption of power by the state – thus there are clear hierarchies, Functions and division of labour among the right-wing populists, the statesman AfD cadres and the moving executive branch of neo-Nazis and right-wing hooligans, as well as entangled secret services, a partly already infected police force and a grumbling "people" – all in all, these are situational, machine-based chains of a proto-Fascist overall structure.

1The search for meaning and the delusion of interpretation have the form of time, and time has the form of the search for meaning and the delusion of interpretation. Paranoia is the production and circulation of interpretation through the production of difference, tied to the Shooting through the real (noise) with soft gaps and shooting through intrusive durations with (hard gaps).

translated by DeepL.

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